

# Dowry

Spring 2019 Issue, N°41

*“O Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and our most gentle Queen and Mother, look down in mercy upon England thy Dowry.”*



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# Editorial: The Great Thaw?



‘Global warming is a threat on our church!’ – FSSP clerics reluctantly confirmed. Taking some exercise during the exams last January, FSSP seminarians in Wigratzbad built an impressive church with natural local snow (see front cover picture). After a while though, they sadly had to admit that the heat of the Bavarian sun raised concerns for the future of the church. Many share their anxiety, for the Church universal.

Increasingly, Holy Church groans under the simultaneous pressures of Islam and of dictatorial relativism, not to forget Communism both in its political form and in its cultural guise. The efforts made over the past sixty years to befriend or at least placate those powers have met with little success or none. Meanwhile, the Bride of Christ is marred by the crimes of her clergy on a scale reminiscent of the so-called Dark Ages, when the Doctor of the Church St Peter Damian wrote his *Liber Gomorrhianus*, nearly one thousand years ago. Many good Catholics feel as if their beloved Mother the Church were shrinking, or melting rather, under some ever fiercer hellish blaze. Where will it stop?

Back in Wigratzbad, our seminarians worked hard to find alternative ways of contributing to the strengthening up of the c[C]hurch. Following a realistic approach, they first checked what St Thomas Aquinas taught about snow in his Commentary of Aristotle’s *Meteorology On the place of the generation of hail and snow*. Needless to say, the *Doctor Communis* has a lot to say on many other topics. The more Catholics learn from him, the stronger the Church will be... under God’s sun: please urgently visit [www.newadvent.org/summa/](http://www.newadvent.org/summa/)

As to Mohammedans, at a time when non-Muslims are branded ‘intolerant’ when openly discussing the problems connected with Islam, we recommend two books written by former Muslims, a man from Iraq and a woman from Iran. They give us a much-needed insight into the religion founded by Muhammad, over six hundred years after the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Their accounts show us that even in our modern era, Muslims do convert to Catholicism, attracted by the Holy Eucharist.

As it happens, both authors attend the traditional Latin Mass. Such was also the Mass which mysteriously attracted a Muslim couple in Malawi. Their son became a priest and now ardently wishes to offer the Traditional Latin Mass. These courageous converts prompt us to examine how we can make more fruitful use of our

religious freedom – while it lasts – which they paid such a great price to benefit from.

We Western Catholics undergo growing legal persecution in our formerly Christian countries. But the witness of these converts from Islam reminds us that we ‘*have not yet resisted unto blood*’ (Heb 12:4). Their heroic endurance encourages us to put earthly goods into perspective and to ask ourselves difficult questions such as: Am I not incrementally giving in to the mandates of the world, surrendering to fear, comfort, and mediocrity? Do I make use of the means of sanctification still within my reach, e.g. Holy Mass and confession, doctrinal conferences and retreats, pious associations and confraternities?

Interest is growing for our retreats (nearly 50 applicants for our annual one at Douai Abbey last month – for only 38 spaces), for our conferences and articles. But the needs increase even more rapidly, so that this Lent and henceforth, each of us should really pause... – examine his or her conscience, and beg the Holy Ghost for more zeal, more hope, and more enthusiasm to learn, live and spread the Catholic faith! We who have received more than others through no merit of our own are accountable for the use we make of our Catholic traditions and patrimony. More is expected of us. Salvation is at stake: ‘for woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel’ (1 Cor 9:16). This warning by St Paul should not be heard negatively as a threat, but rather as a blissful invitation, since the deeper we know Christ, the more His charity urges us.

Dear friends, we want to do our utmost to bring our country (and the entire world) back to Our Lady and Our Lord. To equip our Fraternity with an infrastructure matching better the scale of the task ahead, we launched the [Priory Campaign](#) last summer. As we write, a decisive step is about to be taken, which should secure ownership of the former St Mary’s School building next to our beautiful church in Warrington, please God. We thank you wholeheartedly for your support through prayer, donations and publicity during the first stage of the *Priory Campaign*. Please continue to pray, as further obstacles might still appear. Check our website and [Facebook](#) page for imminent updates on this important undertaking. We assure you of our prayer for a grace-filled Lent and Easter.

Fr Armand de Malleray, FSSP,  
Superior of the English FSSP Apostolate,  
Ash Wednesday 2019. □

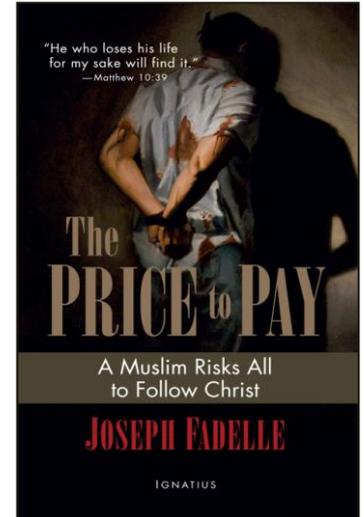
*Malleray*

# Former Muslims Give Thanks For Conversion

## *The Price to Pay*

Joseph Fabelle is an Iraqi man who converted from Islam to Roman Catholicism. He wrote his [autobiography](#) in 2012. The book follows Joseph Fabelle's conversion to Roman Catholicism. Fabelle, who was previously named Muhammad, began showing an interest in Catholicism after he was conscripted into Saddam Hussein's army and roomed with Massoud, a Christian. Muhammad sees Massoud's Christianity as shocking and distasteful but as time passes, he becomes intrigued by Christianity and eventually converts to Catholicism along with his wife.

Muhammad chose 'Joseph' as his baptismal name. He undergoes a great amount of persecution from family members. After the blows come imprisonment, torture, and eventually execution by his own family. The hand of God is manifestly at work, rescuing Fabelle in miraculous ways more than once. The short book reads like a thriller and feels like a craftily-staged Hollywood action movie. But in this case, the film director is called Divine Providence. All is true. Fabelle lives in France, where he attends the Traditional Latin Mass. Still under threat from Muslims, he is accompanied by bodyguards when giving conferences. (For a broader depiction of a similar conversion story, read Evelyn Oliver's timely novel [The Egyptian Guide – From Jihad to Joy](#), reviewed by C. Turner in the previous issue of [Dowry](#).) □

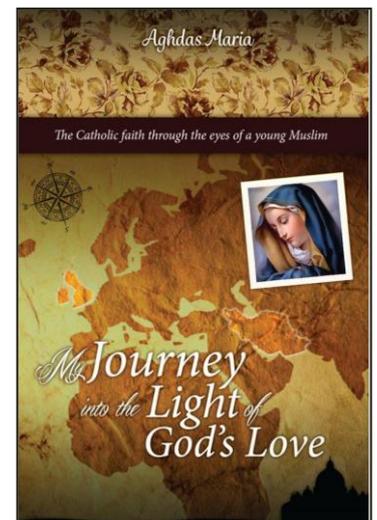


## *My Journey in the Light of God's Love*

This is a [true story](#), based on the life of a devout Iranian Muslim girl who had every ambition to do great things in the world. This beautiful journey begins in Iran, at a time of revolutions and the fall of the monarchy, and ends up in the seemingly strange culture of the West, in London, England. This young woman, who was determined to keep the Islamic faith she had so devoutly practiced from her early years, fell in love, which changed everything. Resolute to convert her fiancé, in a search for truth and a deeper knowledge of God, she stumbled upon something beautiful, something which rings out with Truth – something she could not ignore. Our English readers will be thrilled to discover that Aghdas Maria is yet another convert of our dear late [Fr Hugh Thwaites](#), S.J.

By following this journey into Catholicism through the eyes of an Iranian Muslim, you will hear of the stark contrasts in culture and religion. This exciting account opens the reader's mind to a better understanding of the many issues that separate Islam from Christianity. This story, which moves from marriage to 10 children – two of whom have vocations to the priesthood – cannot be compared to any other. It is a unique look into the personal life of a soul, in which God has moved mountains to obtain His end. It is an example of God's hand leading a soul along a spiritual journey into a deeper union with Himself.

As with all conversion stories, which are often filled with adventure, persecution and sorrow, this one will not disappoint. This story will entice anyone who has an interest in Iranian culture, Islam and the Catholic Faith. Aghdas Maria lives in the South East of England where she attends the traditional Latin Mass, as much as is made available. □



# Muslim Invasion Stopped By Otranto Martyrs

*Matteo Salonia explains the historical context of the glorious witness of Otranto Christians. Notably, the 800 men were the first canonized by Pope Francis, after Pope Benedict XVI had announced it – together with his abdication. Dr. Matteo Salonia holds a PhD in History from the University of Liverpool and is currently a Lecturer in Early Modern History at King's College London. Our colleagues at Oremus, the Westminster Cathedral magazine, asked permission to reproduce his earlier article on Christian Slaves originally published in Dowry (Issue 40).*

Otranto is a sunny Italian town with historical links to the Byzantine Empire and strategically positioned on the east coast of Puglia, at the entrance of the Adriatic Sea. For centuries its small harbor has been a port of call for ships traveling between Venice and the Levantine markets of Crete, Alexandria, Constantinople, and the Black Sea. When, in 1442, the Kingdom of Naples was conquered by the Aragonese, Otranto entered the orbit of the Spanish Crown of Aragon. Yet, the political project of the Aragonese kings was mostly focused on the Western Mediterranean, where they hoped to establish a powerbase and increase their revenues. Soon after the Aragonese takeover of Naples, the geopolitical situation across the Mediterranean worsened significantly. In particular, the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople, in 1453, meant that Islamic forces could now be deployed against Latin Christendom. In part as an answer to this new threat, in 1454 several Italian states signed the Peace of Lodi.

At this point, Ferrante, the Aragonese king of Naples, tried to position himself as the monarch who could lead a counterattack, free Constantinople, and even retake Jerusalem. However, when in July 1480 a large Ottoman fleet sent by the Sultan Mehmet II suddenly appeared

in front of Otranto, Europe soon discovered that Ferrante was not even able to defend the eastern part of his own kingdom. The terrified population of Otranto, seeing about a hundred Ottoman ships on the horizon and then thousands of Islamic soldiers disembarking, sent messengers to call for help and then took refuge within the walls of the city. But no relief army came from Naples.

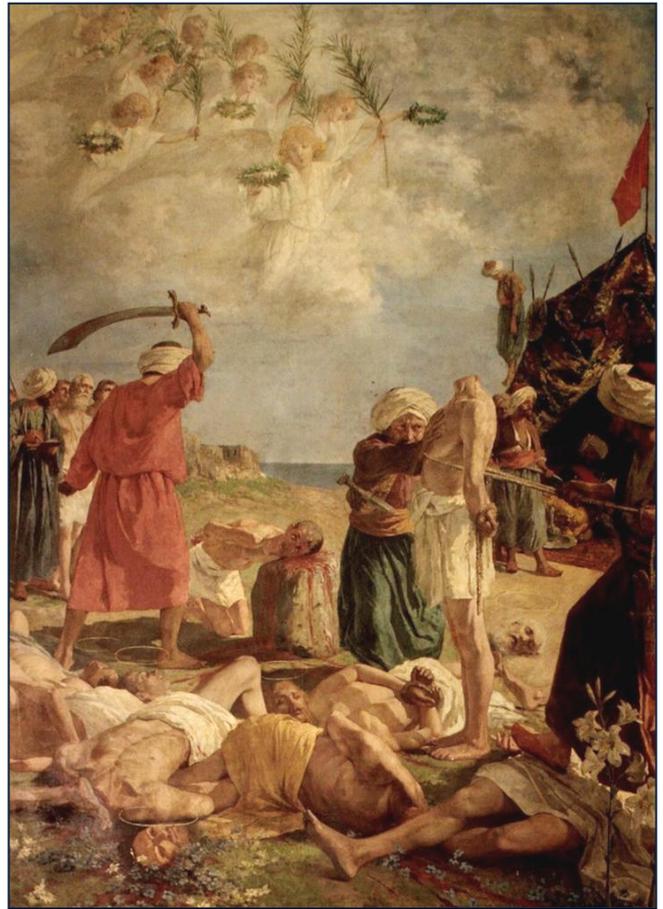
It is important to realise that the size of the Ottoman expedition was considerable, indicating that, in the mind of the Sultan, Otranto was merely going to be a bridgehead for a larger expedition against Rome. So, when the citizens of Otranto decided not to surrender and started to throw rocks, furniture, boiled oil and arrows against the Islamic army besieging the town, they truly changed the course of history. It took two weeks for the Ottomans to break into Otranto, thanks to a breach opened by their cannons. By then, the



entire Italian peninsula knew of the attack, and the way up North was blocked by Ferrante's troops, the Neapolitan barons, and reinforcements paid by Pope Sixtus IV.

For their courage, the citizens of Otranto were going to pay a high price. When the enraged Islamic troops entered the town, first they slaughtered every person they encountered in the streets, and then they headed for the Cathedral, where hundreds of people had taken refuge. There, the Archbishop Stefano Agricoli, dressed with liturgical vestments and holding up a crucifix, confronted the Ottoman soldiers and refused to abjure the Christian faith. He was decapitated on the spot, and all the priests were executed. Then, the Ottomans killed all the infants and the men above 50. Women and older children were taken prisoners and subsequently shipped away as slaves. Finally, the remaining 800 able-bodied men of Otranto were given a choice: convert to Islam or die. A local tailor answered that they were not going to convert, and that actually this was their chance to save their souls in a manner that would be fitting, since Our Lord had also died for them on the Cross. The 800 men were led on a nearby hill and decapitated. The people of Otranto literally vanished, executed or enslaved, so much so that after the Islamic troops finally left the town in 1481, following the death of Mehmet II, the city had to be repopulated by people from the countryside and from other towns of Puglia.

The story of the Martyrs of Otranto, who were canonized by Pope Francis in 2013, is a little-known episode in the long struggle to defend Christendom from the assault of Islam. This struggle went on for about 10 centuries, but it entered a new phase precisely after the fall of Constantinople. The attack on Otranto signalled the beginning of a direct Ottoman assault on Western Europe, which would intensify from 1517, when the Sultan conquered Mamluk Egypt, thereby unifying a great part of the Islamic world. It is difficult for modern Europeans to realise for how long Christendom was under siege and how close the Ottomans were, in 1480, to marching on Rome. Yet, what happened at Otranto is significant not only because it probably prevented a surprise attack on Rome, but also from a spiritual point of view. Archbishop Stefano Agricoli and about 800 other men were given a choice, they could have saved their earthly lives. Nevertheless, their eyes looked at something beyond this world, at that prize that is in Heaven. Hence, their martyrdom remains a shining example of Faith and of friendship with Christ. □



According to the chronicles quoted by Wikipedia,

*'The military garrison had fled even before the siege would begin, but local citizens stood in the breach. In the end, the remaining eight hundred defenders were told to convert to Islam or be slain. A tailor named Antonio Primaldi is said to have proclaimed 'Now it is time for us to fight to save our souls for the Lord. And since he died on the cross for us, it is fitting that we should die for him.' To which those captives with him gave a loud cheer.*

*On 14<sup>th</sup> August they were led to the Hill of Minerva (later renamed the Hill of Martyrs). There they were to be executed, with Primaldi to be beheaded first. After the blade decapitated him 'his body allegedly remaining stubbornly and astonishing upright on its feet. Not until all had been decapitated could the aghast executioners force Primaldi's corpse to lie prone.' Witnessing this, one Muslim executioner (whom the chroniclers say was an Ottoman officer called Bersabei) is said to have converted on the spot and been impaled immediately by his fellows for doing so.*

*Long after, the bodies of the martyred Otrantines were found uncorrupt and were transferred to the city's cathedral and to Naples.'*

# A Paradigm of Unfolding

An analogy between Christ's Holy Shroud and Divine Revelation – by Fr Armand de Malleray, FSSP

## Introduction

All along Church history, new doctrinal statements are issued as part of the Magisterium, in fulfilment of the Church's teaching mission. In what sense are they new? Never can such pronouncements contradict earlier ones. They can only make more explicit what has always been part of Divine Revelation, consisting of Scripture and Tradition. The Hierarchy of the Church and Her theologians gradually unfold Revealed Truth, after the parable of Our Lord: 'Every scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven, is like to a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure new things and old' (Matthew 13:52). The data is not to be invented or imported, even less construed, but merely expounded under the guidance of the Holy Ghost: 'The Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you' (John 14:26).

To explain the development of Catholic doctrine, we offer an analogy between unfolding Christ's Holy Shroud and developing Christ's Revelation. The purpose in each case is to display the full figure of Christ, either visually on the cloth, or doctrinally through magisterial promulgations. On Easter morning then, St Peter, St John and St Mary Magdalene found the empty linens wrapped together in the empty tomb. Some time on that day, they would have taken with them the precious relic. Back home in the Upper Room, with what emotion they would have slowly unfolded the linens, gradually displaying the Master's silhouette:



3D rendition of the Turin Shroud

first His shoulder, then His elbow, now His foot and then His Head... Everywhere, their eyes would meet so many wounds, all endured for their redemption – and ours.

Please note that it is irrelevant to our analogy whether or not the Turin Shroud is indeed the one in which the Saviour lay buried. What is certain is that there was such a shroud, and that none more scientifically convincing than the Turin one has surfaced.

Upon Christ's folded Shroud as within Christ's Revelation, the entirety of the message is present from the start – albeit hidden. Consequently, the Church cannot add anything new to the data given. She can only unfold Christ's silhouette and make explicit His Good News. She bears witness to growth, like a mother to the child in her womb, or like astronomer Father Georges Lemaître theorising universal expansion (later known as the Big Bang theory). In each case, a core is given and development follows. How long will the unfolding of Christ's Revelation take? It will take until Christ's return. The completion of this work of patience, love and humility will mark the end of time. Then Christ will appear before all eyes, as if His eyelids on the Shroud opened, radiating His Good News as a reward of glory for the just, and as retribution for those who will have shut their minds to His truth and their hearts to His mercy.

## 1- Considering the Holy Shroud

What does the Holy Shroud look like? It is a depiction of Our Lord's tortured Body (both back and front),

spread across the 14.5-foot-long by 1.4-foot-wide linen cloth, with such accuracy that this sacred relic has been termed ‘The Fifth Gospel’. The Holy Shroud – presently kept in Turin, Italy – is the most tested object in the world. The scientific findings, due to their number and complexity, now constitute a distinct branch of science called sindonology, after the word ‘sindon’, the Greek word for ‘shroud’.

Let us recall a few sindonological discoveries. It took nineteen centuries to realise that the Shroud is a photographic negative: inverting paler and darker areas reveals the actual picture. Further analysis established that the depiction results from irradiation, not from the application of pigments upon the linen material. Later on, the image was found to be three-dimensional, allowing the shaping of a resin model of Our Lord’s Body as when it was lying wrapped in the Shroud. Anomalies such as the absence of thumbs on either hand were explained, while microscopic examination found diverse pollens from the Middle-East stuck in the fibres of the cloth.

Thus, the Holy Shroud of Christ yields its secrets by stages, and yet, all information has been present on the material since Easter morning. Similarly, Christian doctrine develops across time, even though Christ’s Revelation was completed when Christ’s last apostle

died. For example, in 451 the Council of Chalcedon defined that Christ had two natures, the human and the divine ones, under one single divine self. But these truths had been contained in Christ’s Revelation from the start. Another example: in 1215 the Council of Lateran defined the Eucharistic change as *Transubstantiation*, not inventing a new belief, but explaining an original truth. Hence, just as no genuine scientist would add to the Holy Shroud data from without, equally, no Catholic theologian can ever increase Christ’s Revelation. Scientists will apply to the Holy Shroud modern technology and the resources of their intellect to infer further evidence. Similarly, Catholic theologians rely on their skills and inspiration to draw new conclusions from pre-existing truths. In either case, new investigations can only build upon earlier findings.

The following episode in the Shroud examinations illustrates this principle *a contrario*. In 1989, Carbon 14 tests seemed to establish that the Holy Shroud dated from the middle ages. But leading researcher Raymond Rogers changed his mind on discovering that the samples tested were not part of the original material. They belonged instead to the repairs undergone by the Shroud after the 1532 fire in Chambery. In other words, medieval cotton threads had been expertly woven into the original linen fabric

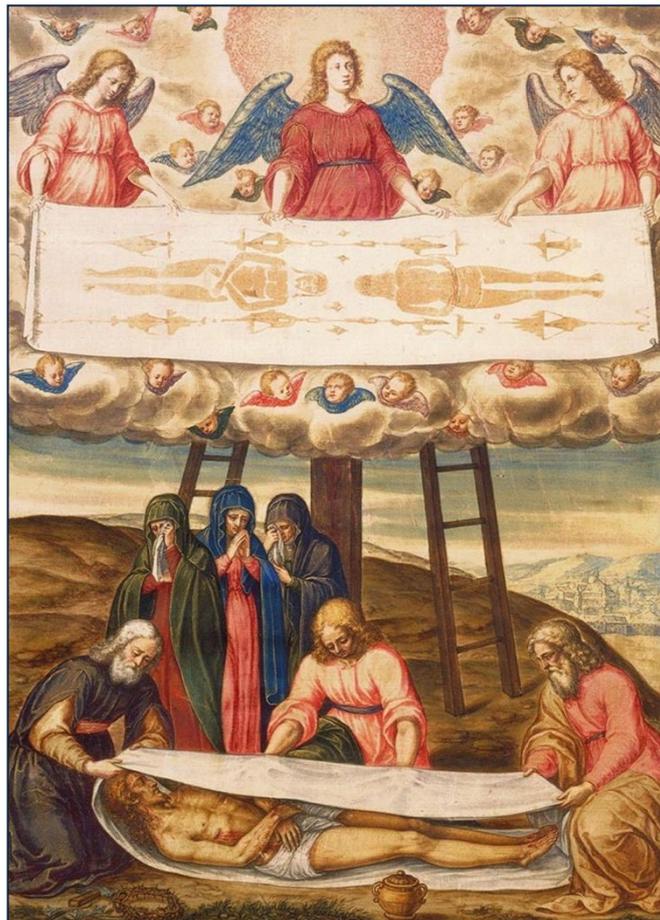
*The Disciples Peter and John Running to the Sepulchre on the Morning of the Resurrection*, by Eugene Burnand, 1898



to mend fire damage. This applies analogically to the work of theologians probing Christ's Revelation. Any theological statement one may proffer in contradiction with Christ's Revelation rests upon unauthentic premises (and fosters a non-Catholic agenda). Like the Carbon 14 findings, such unorthodox statements may sound convincing when issued, but like them, they are flawed at some level, hence unscientific.

## 2- Why Holy Church takes Her time

Holy Mother Church tells us all truth about God. She does not tell it all at once though – for three reasons. First, God is infinite, whereas our human intelligence is limited of its nature, and obscured by sin, so that we need time to explore the truth. Second, unlike angels who understand by intuition or immediate grasp, we humans reach the truth gradually, from consequences to causes. Third, the Church reacts to historical circumstances: whether adverse ones such as heresies and wars, or favourable ones such as the deeds of saints or even the discoveries of scientists. By God's Providence, the Church's response to circumstances leads Her to focus on this or that specific aspect of the revealed truth, while further aspects will only be examined later on. For instance, the Church's pro-life teaching was greatly developed in the past fifty years in response to institutionalised abortion.



*Burial of Christ*, by Giovanni Battista Della Rovere, 1625

These three factors help understand the development of doctrine. Development here expresses inner growth and precludes addition from without. This is the capital point to understand: whenever the Church makes a new pronouncement, it is never new in relation to God's Revelation, but only in relation to contemporary believers. For example, when the Divine Motherhood of Our Lady was defined at the Council of Ephesus in 431, it was new inasmuch as the Church had not until then committed Her authority to affirm this fact dogmatically. But that truth was already contained in God's Revelation, rather than

added to it later on. Long before it was promulgated as a dogma, the divine Motherhood existed as a fact, from the instant when the Blessed Virgin Mary had answered 'Yes' to Archangel Gabriel at Her Annunciation. The dogmatic promulgation at Ephesus did not create the fact. It only provided formal assurance of orthodoxy. For this, the inhabitants of Ephesus in thanksgiving took to the streets, holding torches and singing hymns. Believers of all ages may react similarly when further aspects of God's Revelation are displayed by Holy Mother Church through Her Magisterium.

## 3- God's Love Letter

God's Revelation is like His love letter to His immaculate Bride, the Church. For a letter to be safely transmitted, the sheet of paper requires folding into an envelope (or many sheets, because God has a lot to

tell to His beloved). When a young woman receives a letter from her fiancé (ink on paper being more personal than emails on a screen or instant messages), she does not see the sentences and words, nor his handwriting and signature, until with her own fingers she delicately extracts the sheets from the envelope, and lovingly unfolds them for her eyes eventually to meet the written signs. Even then, although she can guess that he wrote gracious things about their shared love, she is not able to grasp in one glance the detail of his communication. It takes unfolding and reading time – until the beloved returns.

With this comparison in mind, we may ask ourselves: what are the *fingers* with which Holy Mother Church unfolds God's message of love? They are the theologians and the Magisterium. The Church's *fingers* are Catholic believers of either sex mandated by the Holy See to apply their sound philosophical and theological training to probing Holy Scripture and Tradition. These people examine the Deposit of Faith according to their individual temperaments, skills and interests, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost and in response to historical circumstances. In that sense, their inquiries entail novelty and subjectivity. But the object of their investigation can never be a product of their imagination, a fanciful innovation or an artificial addition, however clever or expedient it may sound. On the contrary, whatever they find has to be just that: found – not imagined. They can deduce, not invent.

Holy Mother Church, then, has loving fingers. Now, what is Her love letter? Upon what sheet and within what sealed envelope did Her Beloved Jesus imprint His message of passionate love? It is upon a *burial* sheet, sealed within a stone cavity. On Easter morning, the Risen Spouse let His angel break the seal from His tombstone; and His first pope found the empty shroud that covered the dead Lord's Holy Face and Body: 'the napkin that had been about his head, [was] not lying with the linen cloths, but apart, wrapped up into one place' (John 20:7). Christ's message was folded, so that even Simon Peter did not behold the full silhouette of the Saviour at the time.



Later on that memorable day however, the Vicar of Christ would have taken away with him for safekeeping the folded shroud – the material witness of the Resurrection, which is the core of the Christian Revelation as St Paul affirms: 'if Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain' (1 Cor 15:14).

#### 4- Truth knows no expiration date

Certain dogmatic pronouncements can be more important than others, but they cannot contradict past ones. Some well-meaning Catholics believe, more or less consciously, that referring to Councils earlier than the twenty-first one (also the latest: Vatican II, 1962-1965) is disloyal. They mistakenly assume that what was defined in centuries past loses its relevance with

time; or worse, that truths of old become toxic after a number of years, like pharmaceutical drugs past expiration date. On 19<sup>th</sup> November 2013, Pope Francis proved such assumptions erroneous when he commemorated the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Council of Trent, [writing](#) to his extraordinary envoy Walter Cardinal Brandmüller:

*'It behoves the Church to recall with more prompt and attentive eagerness the most fruitful doctrine which came out of that Council convened in the Tyrolese region. Certainly not without cause, the Church has for a long time already accorded so much care to the Decrees and Canons of that Council that are to be recalled and observed... Graciously hearing the very same Holy Ghost, the Holy Church of our age, even now, continues to restore and meditate upon the most abundant doctrine of Trent... You will exhort all who shall participate in this event, that, souls joined together with the soul of the Most Holy Redeemer, they may be fully conscious of all the fruits derived from this Council, and that they may unite themselves in bringing these fruits to others and in propagating them in every way.'*

Thus, five centuries after the Council of Trent, the successor of Peter affirms the perennial validity of the truths defined in its documents, and commands them

to be ‘propagated in every way’, following Pope John Paul II’s similar praise of ‘the perennially valid teaching of the Council of Trent’ (Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* §15, 17 April 2003).

Still, it cannot be denied that of late, disconcerting statements have been issued by the hierarchy of the Church at every level. Even though no formal heresy has been promulgated, traditional teaching on marriage for instance, or on death penalty, is undermined. How are the laity and clergy to react in such situations? The Code of Canon Law (1983) states that: ‘They have the right, indeed at times the duty, in keeping with their knowledge, competence and position, to manifest to the sacred Pastors their views on matters which concern the good of the Church. They have the right also to make their views known to others of Christ’s faithful, but in doing so they must always respect the integrity of faith and morals, show due reverence to the Pastors and take into account both the common good and the dignity of individuals’ (Can. 212 §3).

## 5- The Sense of Faith equips us to discern

A document of particular relevance to this question, [\*The Sense of Faith in the Life of the Church\*](#), was published under Pope Francis by the International Theological Commission of the Holy See on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2014, explaining how the ‘sense of faith’ (in Latin *sensus fidei*) enables the baptised to assess doctrinal truth. We will now quote extensively six paragraphs from this document:

‘49. The *sensus fidei fidelis* is a sort of spiritual instinct that enables the believer to judge spontaneously whether a particular teaching or practice is or is not in conformity with the Gospel and with apostolic faith. It is intrinsically linked to the virtue of faith itself; it flows from, and is a property of, faith. It is compared to an instinct because it is not primarily the result of rational deliberation, but is rather a form of spontaneous and natural knowledge, a sort of perception (*aisthesis*).

53. The *sensus fidei* is the form that the instinct which accompanies every virtue takes in the case of the virtue of faith. ‘Just as, by the habits of the other virtues, one sees what is becoming in respect of that habit, so, by the habit of faith, the human mind is directed to assent to such things as are becoming to a right faith, and not to assent to others.’ Faith, as a theological virtue, enables the believer to participate in the knowledge that God has of himself and of all things. In the believer, it takes the form of a ‘second nature’. By means of grace and the theological virtues, believers become ‘participants of the divine nature’ (2 Pet 1:4), and are in a way connaturalised to God. As a result, they react spontaneously on the basis of that participated divine nature, in the same way that living beings react instinctively to what does or does not suit their nature.

60. Three principal manifestations of the *sensus fidei fidelis* in the personal life of the believer can be highlighted. The *sensus fidei fidelis* enables individual



This 3d carbon copy was created using the Holy Shroud of Turin.  
Next page: Pope Francis venerates the Holy Shroud.

believers: 1) to discern whether or not a particular teaching or practice that they actually encounter in the Church is coherent with the true faith by which they live in the communion of the Church (see below, §§61-63); 2) to distinguish in what is preached between the essential and the secondary (§64); and 3) to determine and put into practice the witness to Jesus Christ that they should give in the particular historical and cultural context in which they live (§65).

61. ‘Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God ; for many false prophets have gone out into the world’ (1Jn 4:1). The *sensus fidei fidelis* confers on the believer the capacity to discern whether or not a teaching or

practice is coherent with the true faith by which he or she already lives. If individual believers perceive or ‘sense’ that coherence, they spontaneously give their interior adherence to those teachings or engage personally in the practices, whether it is a matter of truths already explicitly taught or of truths not yet explicitly taught.

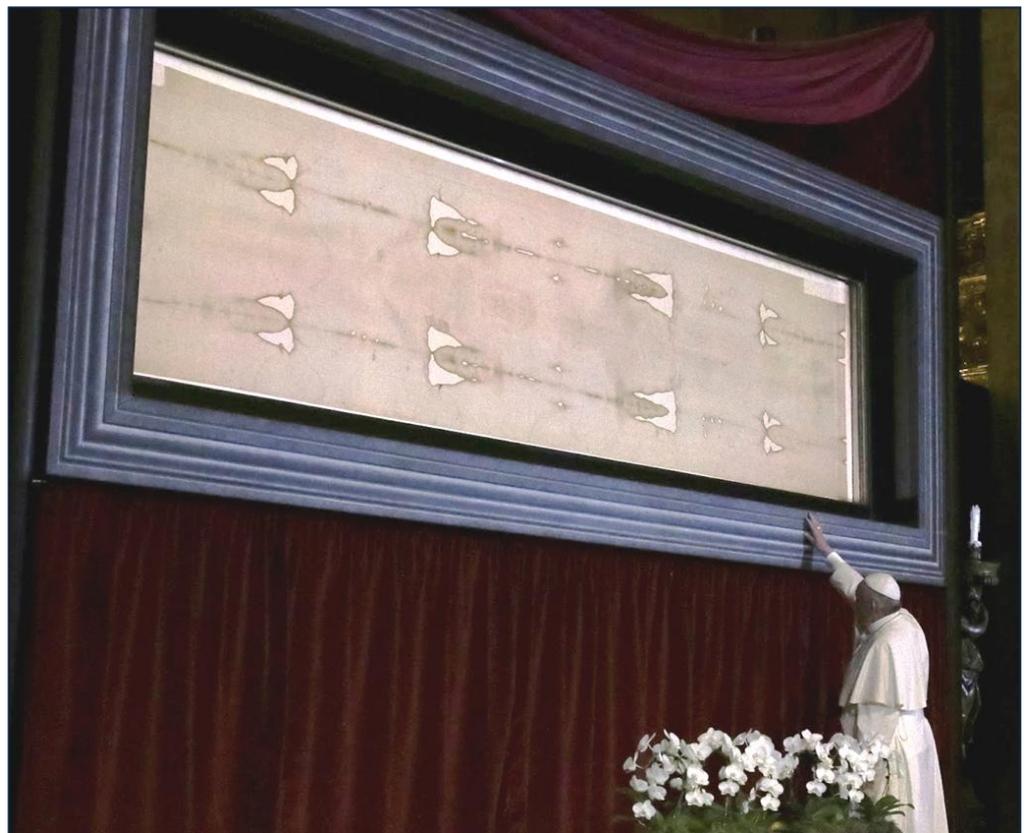
62. The *sensus fidei fidelis* also enables individual believers to perceive any disharmony, incoherence, or contradiction between a teaching or practice and the authentic Christian faith by which they live. They react as a music lover does to false notes in the performance of a piece of music. In such cases, believers interiorly resist the teachings or practices concerned and do not accept them or participate in them. ‘The *habitus* of faith possesses a capacity whereby, thanks to it, the believer is prevented from giving assent to what is contrary to the faith, just as chastity gives protection with regard to whatever is contrary to chastity.’

63. Alerted by their *sensus fidei*, individual believers may deny assent even to the teaching of legitimate pastors if they do not recognise in that teaching the voice of Christ, the Good Shepherd. ‘The sheep follow [the Good Shepherd] because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run away from him because they do not know the voice of strangers’ (Jn 10:4-5). For St Thomas, a believer, even without theological competence, can and even must resist, by virtue of the *sensus fidei*, his or her bishop if the latter preaches heterodoxy. In such a case, the believer does not treat himself or herself as the ultimate criterion of the truth of faith, but rather, faced with materially ‘authorised’ preaching which he or she finds troubling, without being able to explain exactly why, defers assent and

appeals interiorly to the superior authority of the universal Church.’

## 6- Filial Concern

These authoritative quotes from a theological document published by the Holy See as recently as 2014 may surprise for their boldness. They stress clearly that the indiscriminating acceptance of any doctrine is not Catholic. On the contrary, genuine worship of Christ as Truth Incarnate leads every believer to assess what is presented as truth, even



when uttered by those acting in Christ’s name. The touchstone of orthodoxy is continuity with what has always been professed and believed in the Church of Christ: ‘For the Holy Spirit was promised to the successors of Peter not so that they might, by his revelation, make known some new doctrine, but that, by his assistance, they might religiously guard and faithfully expound the revelation or deposit of faith transmitted by the apostles’ (Vatican I, Pastor Aeternus Chapter 4).

With this in mind, one understands how considering the hypothesis even of a heretical pope is not in itself

imprudent or disrespectful. Eminent and saintly theologians have done so, for the sake of guiding souls in times of perplexity. Cardinal St Robert Bellarmine stated that: *‘A Pope who is a manifest heretic, ceases in himself to be Pope and head, just as he ceases in himself to be a Christian and member of the body of the Church.’* It is one thing for a sovereign pontiff to allow the spread of falsity by other prelates, or even to support it privately, or to be quoted as such – it is another for him to teach formal heresy with all the marks of authority required to bind the Church to his error. St Bellarmine believed that Christ would preserve His Church from the latter evil.

We should all filially pray for this, while making better use of the wealth of safe doctrinal resources provided on the Internet. At the tips of our fingers, we can gain access for free to the texts of the twenty-one Councils and numerous papal encyclicals, but also the Fathers of the Church and the works of sound theologians and spiritual authors. All such doctrinal riches are offered us as the gradual unfolding of Christ’s Revelation. Nothing can be changed or added

to Christ’s Revelation, since it was completed at the death of His last apostle. But much can be deduced from the same Revelation, through the humble and loving process of explicating pre-existing truth, according to our analogy with the unfolding of Christ’s Holy Shroud.

As our reader may have noticed, bringing together Christ’s Revelation and Shroud rests upon a motive stronger than an analogy. The Shroud indeed bears witness to the Revelation in the most realistic manner. It is significant that Easter Saturday’s Gospel quoted above shows St John waiting outside the tomb for St Peter to enter first. Again, the respective positions of the linens are noticed as if through St Peter’s eyes. Who more than Christ’s Vicar has authority to guard, pass on and expound the treasure given by the Risen Lord? On that same Easter day, as we learn, the Lord ‘appeared to Simon’ (Lk 24:34). There were no witnesses. Or perhaps, the Shroud was the witness, as we now attempt to picture, offering this meditation to conclude our essay.

## Conclusion

Alone at last in the Upper Room, Simon had unfolded the long strip of cloth, nowhere more fittingly than across the trestles of the Last Supper table. Three nights earlier, upon another cloth, the Lord had made Himself truly present under the Eucharistic species at the first Holy Mass. The Eleven and He had walked thence to Gethsemane. Before cockcrow, Simon had thrice denied his Lord. Since then Jesus had died and was risen.

Back in the Upper Room on Easter



day, Simon was on his knees at the far end of the long linen rectangle. His eyes slightly higher than the level of the cloth swollen in successive waves upon the trestles, the fisherman would look at the maculated Shroud as a seaman at a vast archipelago spread across a limitless map. Wide or tiny, each bloodstain was an island, mystically bearing the name of each and every sinner, redeemed through the wounds of the Lamb.

Which stain bore Simon's name? It could not be less than three, one for each denial – and so many more... In St Peter's soul, contrition connected the reddish shapes of various sizes like the stars under which he was reborn, as in a new constellation named *Absolution*. It was probably no surprise to Simon then, when he became aware of Christ's bodily presence, standing at the other end of His unfolded Shroud. The contrite Vicar had opened his soul to the Saviour already. Christ confirmed His pardon and left, until they met again by the Sea of Galilee.

His Vicar remained on his knees looking across the bloodied sheet, while on either side of the table of redemption hundreds of men materialised, imitating his posture: his successors. What were there names, their races and languages: Clement, Anaclet, Alexander, Fabian, John, Stephen, Pius, Leo, Gregory, Benedict... Francis? How many of them would the Fisherman have until Christ's glorious return? The Lord would not fail to assist them, as He had done for him, that each might be faithful: 'But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren' (Luke 22:32).

Simon would pray for them, that they might 'feed Christ's sheep' (John 21:17) in the pastures of truth

unadulterated, whatever the cost. In order to save though, truth must not only be believed, but also implemented by all believers. Every genuine Pope to Christ's flock would also have to 'teach them to observe all things whatsoever the Lord had commanded His apostles' (Matthew 28:20). The

Mother of the Lord had ordered it so, at the wedding in Cana. She did not command merely to *believe* whatever Christ would say, but to *do* it: 'His mother saith to the waiters: Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye' (John 2:5).

Presently, Peter felt her hand gently resting on his shoulder. No nail had pierced that hand, but a sword had pierced the immaculate heart

of the Mother who, standing behind him, silently assured forgiveness to the kneeling penitent, and promised assistance to Her Son's first Pope, now rising. Within fifty days, She would be with Peter and the ten others in this very room, when the Holy Ghost would be sent upon them, turning every believer into an 'epistle of Christ... written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in the fleshly tables of the heart.' (2 Co 3:3).

How long would the unfolding of Christ's Revelation take, until His return in might and glory? A few years; a few centuries; or millennia? One thing was certain: all that was ever to be proclaimed through dogmatic promulgations in the ages to come was already lying there, before Simon's tearful eyes, spread across the linen cloth of the Risen One. His message was imprinted on His Shroud: apparently flat, but unfathomably deep if measured in mercy – transcendently high if gauged with joy. □



Left: *Christ Giving the Keys to St. Peter*, by Peter Paul Rubens, 1614, Berlin; above: *Tears of St Peter*, by Guercino, 1647, Le Louvre, Paris.

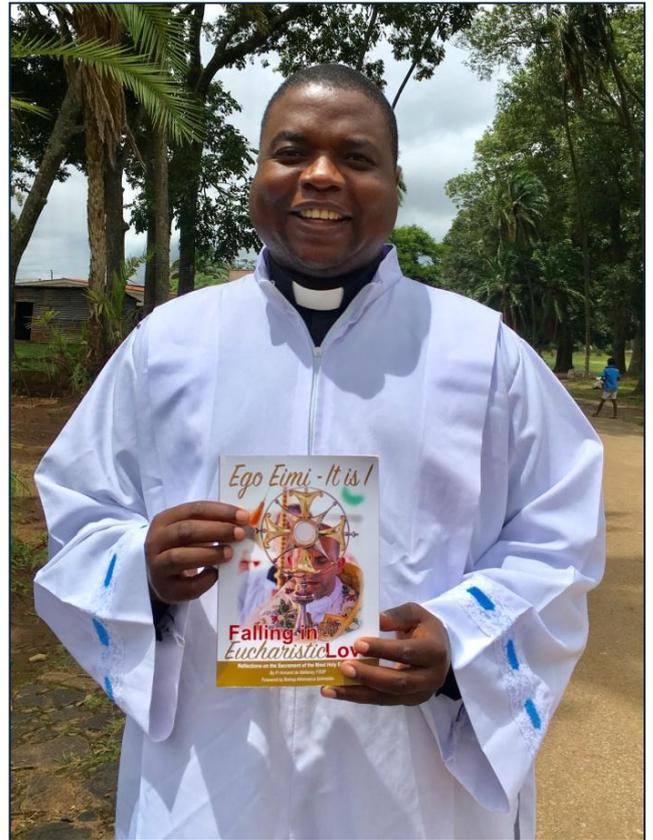
# Waiting For My First Traditional Latin Mass

*By Rev. Fr. Santos Mpingu, a priest of the Zomba Diocese in Malawi, on placement in the Blantyre Diocese. His inspiring story was sent to Dowry by some members of the Confraternity of St Peter (the FSSP's international prayer network for priestly vocations and ministry) who live in Malawi and attend Mass at Limbe Cathedral in the hope of having the Traditional Latin Mass said there one day. Please kindly pray for this as well.*

“If I say, ‘Dominus vobiscum’, respond in this way, ‘Et cum spiritu tuo.’” My mother could sometimes become emotional when she noted how hard it was for me to respond well. On a number of occasions she warned me, ‘Santos, if you have to become a priest, then you must really know how to pronounce Latin words and commit them to memory.’ From time to time, I had to assure her that I would get there and that, someday, I was going to teach her how to properly participate in the Latin Mass.

I must admit, it took me time to believe my parents were converts. Their love for the Church could not fully explain the fact of them being converted from Islam to Christianity. It was in 1967 when my father, John, married Agnes, my mother. At that time, they were both strict Muslims. One day, they even confessed to me that they hated the fact that some people in surrounding villages were Christians. They wished all had submitted themselves to Allah, ‘the only one and true God’.

Every two weeks, a white priest passed by their house and this annoyed them a lot. They contemplated closing the passage so he and his team would have to use another trail. What pained them the most was that every time he passed by, he stopped to greet them.



*(Pictures anticlockwise:  
Fr Mpingu, holding a ‘subversive’ book smuggled into  
Malawi; view from the plateau; Limbe Cathedral.)*



They didn't like it, but he was ever smiling. And he did this for many years.

One Saturday, the white priest was passing by again. He was in the company of a catechist and some elders. My father reports to me that something just came to him and convinced him to approach the priest and greet him. First, he rushed into the house, got his shirt and put it on. Then he ran towards the priest. However, he realised that both the priest and the catechist were looking a little anxious: my father had previously not been friendly to them and they must have wondered what he was up to this time. My father shook hands with the priest and asked him where he went every time he passed by, and what was his purpose? My father was surprised to hear the white man, Fr. Bale, responding in good Chichewa. He was impressed but he would not show it. He left them there and went back to sit on the veranda asking himself, 'How come he speaks like one of us?'

When my mother came back from fetching water, she was greeted by the words, 'From today onwards, we shall pray at the white man's church. He is a nice man and very approachable. I want us to learn much about his faith.' My mother told him that she had been to the white man's church before. Her aunt would sometimes ask her to accompany her to the preparatory seminary chapel. She said she had heard the white man and the congregants pray 'in an angelic language' (Latin). She could not understand the language but she memorised bits of it. Unfortunately, they had to stop going there because there were a lot of lions and other dangerous animals in the forests along the way. She also revealed that she had once attended a Catholic school, but she had to drop out because her parents could not afford to buy her a slate on which to write. (This explained why she didn't go further with her education.) But even though she had previously had an experience with Catholics, she was not interested in going back to the white man's church. She was a Muslim and happy about it.



Furthermore, she knew her parents would not be pleased with her if she left Islam.

My father was determined to become a Catholic, so he started attending catechesis at Nkupu (then attached to the Church of Mary Immaculate, Namitembo Parish, but now of St. Lucia, Chipini Parish). Three months later, my mother followed him and started receiving instruction. What motivated her was the thought that she was going to enjoy the Latin Mass again and that she was going to be better at Latin than my father because she had previously attended the Mass with her aunt in the seminary chapel!

The news of their conversion did not please the relatives of either my father or my mother. Their extended families abandoned them and stopped visiting them. Neither would my parents be welcomed any more if they visited. There were never any physical threats or aggression. However, in Africa the philosophy is that '*I am because we are*'. Thus, the fact that many of their relatives could not visit our house caused deep psychological suffering. This also



meant that help would not be lent to my parents when they were in need.

But this only served to strengthen my parents' faith. Christ gave them new friends and relatives who were very loving. In 1975, their marriage was blessed by Fr. Bale. In turn, my father served the church with zeal. Both clergy and fellow-Catholics loved him, electing him chairman of the parish for several terms.

Some years later, a new team of priests came to the parish, including Frs. Paul and Puzzet. Both came from France. Fr. Paul, the parish priest, was very reserved and found it hard to adapt to the culture in Malawi. But Fr. Puzzet easily adapted and quickly learnt Chichewa. He was a priest for the people and spent much of his time visiting Christians. He would go around the whole parish within a few weeks. He was well-known for his love for local food, especially okra ('therere' in vernacular). He also loved children. Every time he visited our small Christian community, he brought us sweets and I, being son to the chairman of the entire Parish, had the privilege of enjoying *two* sweets! We always looked forward to seeing him again in our small village.

Inspired by Fr. Puzzet, I told my parents that I was going to become a priest too. It would bring me greater joys, I later realised, than merely owning a car and walking with a packet of sweets. I made up my mind to go to the seminary where I would learn Latin and celebrate my first Mass in the presence of my Mum. I even swore before her that I was going to celebrate my first Mass *in Latin*. Fr. Puzzet was delighted when he learnt about what I told my parents. He blessed me with a sign of the cross on my forehead. How I wish he learnt, before his death, that the Lord made me his priest. But am sure he is happy seeing me celebrating Mass. And am sure he intercedes for me. My desire is to visit his grave in France and celebrate Mass there. I will bless his grave with a sign of the cross in the way he did on my forehead and sprinkle it with holy water. May his soul rest in eternal peace.

My first frustration came upon hearing rumours that St. Stanislaus Preparatory Seminary had been closed for lack of funds. This undermined my hope, by the end of my primary school education, to expand on the Latin vocabulary given to me by my mother. Indeed, closing the Preparatory Seminary meant that I would have to wait to start learning Latin at secondary school level. So, I was going to wait for eight solid years... ooh my God! This was too long for me to wait. The most worrying thing was the rate at which my mother forgot the Latin Mass responses. So I made a simple prayer: ‘Lord, keep my mother safe until I can celebrate a Latin Mass for her.’

Nine years later, I found myself participating in a welcoming Mass at the Child Jesus Minor Seminary. I couldn’t believe time had passed so fast that I was now a minor seminarian. I could see my dream coming true. I waited to see the school timetable to know which days we were going to learn Latin. News came that the government was planning to take out Bible Knowledge and Latin from the secondary school syllabus. Honestly, this annoyed me. If I were not going to learn Latin, I failed to see any reason to become a priest. I knew there many people out there, just like my mother, who would have loved to participate in a Latin Mass. And I felt I was called to restore the celebration of the Latin Mass.

So, finally, it was officially announced that Latin and Bible Knowledge subjects had been dropped from the secondary school syllabus. I nearly quit the seminary. Thankfully, I resolved to staying in the seminary just to acquire knowledge and enrol with any university thereafter upon completion of my secondary school education. During one of the holidays I told my mother that ‘the devil had won’. She smiled and answered that ‘God’s wishes were not mine’. Of course, I didn’t understand what she meant by this. Every day I would pray for the authorities in government to rescind their decision before I left the seminary. My prayer was truly answered when the government changed its mind. Unfortunately, our own Catholic Rector and staff decided not to bring back Latin on the timetable anyway, just as they had done with Bible Knowledge. But I accepted my situation and asked God to take control. That was the first time I prayed: “Lord give me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change.”

As I went through the corridors of the two major seminaries in Malawi, I hoped and prayed for the re-

introduction of the Latin Mass. This never occurred. While doing my third year of theology at St. Peter’s Major Seminary, one formator brought the idea of having one Latin Mass per week, but this never materialised. Then, in 2014 I was ordained a priest. God had kept his promise by keeping my parents alive. However, I grieved for having not managed to keep my promise, especially to Mum. I failed to celebrate the Latin Mass for her. She has struggled with her health up to this day. Is the Lord keeping her to wait for my first Latin Mass? There is a growing cry to have Latin Masses celebrated in some churches and chapels in Malawi. Could I be an ambassador for this initiative? Could the Latin Mass be a new tool to evangelise the rest of Africa? □

Fr Mpingu ([santosmpingu02@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:santosmpingu02@yahoo.co.uk)) is looking for donations of missals or missalettes because there are quite a few priests and seminarians who are interested in acquainting themselves with the Traditional Latin Mass. Also, he would like donations of books of saints for children, such as the ones by Mary Fabyan Windeatt, which he wants to get translated into Chichewa. Please email [saraharveycraig@gmail.com](mailto:saraharveycraig@gmail.com) regarding delivery of donations as the Malawian postal service is not reliable.



# Finding One's Predominant Fault

By Fr Konrad Loewenstein, FSSP

## 1. Its Nature

Each of us has a particular temperament which encompasses our whole manner of feeling, judging, sympathizing, willing, and acting. This temperament is to be perfected in each one of us by the practice of the Christian virtues. What can impede this work of perfection, and even bring each of us to our eternal ruin, is what is known as "the Predominant Fault".

Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange OP describes it as "our domestic enemy dwelling in our interior... at times it is like a crack in a wall that seems to be solid but is not so: like a crevice, imperceptible at times but deep, in the beautiful facade of a building, which a vigorous jolt may shake to the foundations." Like a crack, we may notice our predominant fault, but think that it is just on the surface, and does not go deep; or we may have seen it in the past but just painted it over and now we do not see it any more. Prudence dictates that, if we see a crack in a wall, we examine it and see whether it does in fact go deeper: perhaps there is a structural problem which threatens the whole edifice.

Some examples of the predominant fault are moral weakness, sloth, gluttony, sensuality, irascibility, and pride. Our predominant fault can inform and colour our entire temperament, and compromise our predominant virtue which is, to quote Fr Garrigou-Lagrange again, "a happy inclination of our nature" which should develop and increase by Grace. This

predominant virtue should itself determine our temperament.

Take the example of a person who has a temperament which is passive, patient, docile, and resigned, whose predominant fault is moral weakness, whose predominant virtue is gentleness. If his predominant fault gains the ascendancy, he will become prey to human respect, moral cowardice, unreflective conformity to evil conventions and fashions, prey to



*The battle between Carnival and Lent, after Pieter Brueghel the Younger;  
Left: The Penitent Magdalene, by Georges de La Tour, 1640.*

excessive indulgence, and even complete loss of energy. He is no longer gentle but simply weak, although he may, with every-one else as well, regard himself as gentle, meek, good, and kind. His gentleness has been crushed, suppressed, and destroyed by moral weakness.

Similarly, some-one with a temperament which is strong may have as his predominant virtue, fortitude in confronting injustice, but as his predominant vice, anger and irascibility. The danger for this person is that he give free rein to his irascibility, so that his fortitude degenerates into unreasonable violence in

words, deeds and thoughts, which does untold harm to others, but above all to himself.

What is essential is that we first recognise our predominant fault, and then combat it. If we discover moral weakness in ourselves, we must fight it by constantly asking God to make us strong, and doing our best to face up to our duties and responsibilities, and all the unpleasant challenges which life throws up continually, even if there is no-one observing us, to reprimand us for being remiss or disengaged.

If we reflect, by contrast, that we are irascible, we must work on ourselves with the Grace of God and submit our anger to rigorous control, and thereby learn gentleness and docility, even if (as in the cases of St. Ignatius Loyola and St. Francis de Sales) this may involve a labour of many years.

But if we are in this world to perfect ourselves, is this not an important work to do? – at least as important as a conscientious accomplishment of the duties of our state in life, as our daily occupations, and those works of Charity in which we may be trying to help our neighbour. Must we not love ourselves as our neighbour? and is not the true love of self the moral perfection of the self? If our motives in all that we do are flawed by pride for example, then all that we do will be flawed; if we are weak, then we forgo many good actions which would tend in their turn to have many good consequences; if, again, we are too forceful and irascible, we bring about, in the words of the same Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, every kind of disorder; if we are critical of others and harbour and cultivate antipathies, then we are permanently contravening Our Lord's commandment to love our neighbour.



As time passes, the predominant fault becomes a habit, and informs and colours our whole temperament, so that it becomes natural for us to feel, judge, think, and act under its influence, and it becomes hard for us to discern the presence of this fault because it has taken us over. Or if we do discern it, it will be hard for us to admit it, especially if we are proud. And if we both discern and admit the existence of this crack in the wall, we will not want to examine it, if we are morally weak, or if we fear conversion and fear to change thereby our entire lives.

Meanwhile the devil enters in with his wiles. He knows our fault. He has been working with it all our lives. He himself has painted or plastered over the crack, or helped us do so. He augments our blindness in not seeing it, our pride in not admitting it, our fear of rebuilding the whole house, if rebuild it we must.

## 2. How to Discover the Fault

We have said that our predominant fault can inform and colour our entire temperament: the way that we feel, judge, sympathise, will, and act. Were we to find it, to find it out, we could gradually change our

temperament for the better: to become better people; more loving towards God and neighbour; more at peace; more filled with the light of Grace; more happy; more diffusive of God's light in this world and in the next.

It would be a great Grace, says Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, to meet a saint who could say to us: "This is your predominant fault; this is your predominant virtue." With this virtue you are to conquer the fault, and you are to inform and colour all you do, think, and say: your feelings, your desires, your whole view

of life. This virtue is, as it were, the vehicle in which you are to advance through this world with generosity and single-mindedness on the path of union with God.

It would be a Grace indeed to find such a saint, but otherwise how are we to discover our predominant fault? At the beginning of the spiritual life, at the time, for example, of our conversion, it is relatively easy to discover it. But as time passes, we become used to it and we judge all things in its light. It gains dominion over the soul, and, descending deeper into our very being, presents itself as part of our very selves. We have got used to it: indeed we identify ourselves with it, we can't stand back from it. When it takes root in us, says our learned and wise theologian, it offers a particular repugnance to being unmasked and fought, because it wishes to reign in us and over us: it hides itself, it puts on the appearance of virtue.

Weakness clothes itself in the poor apparel of humility; pride in that of magnanimity; anger in the apparel of justice and righteous indignation. Man, the master of self-deceit, ends up by priding himself on the very defect which is his worst enemy, as though it were a virtue. If our neighbour accuses us of this very fault, we reply with complete

conviction: "My dear friend, I may have many defects, but I assure you that this is not one of them". Even if our spiritual director mentions it, we shake our head – excuses come promptly to our mind, for the predominant fault easily excites our passions. It commands them as a master and they obey it instantly. Its fine appearance and its power drive us in the direction of impenitence. We see a remarkable instance in the case of Judas the traitor, *pessimus mercator*: the most terrible merchant. Thrift leads to avarice, avarice to treachery, and treachery to impenitence.

The enemy of our soul, meanwhile, who knows this fault, makes use of it to stir up trouble in and around us: to stir up strife, commotion, uproar, and unpleasantness: storms in our soul, storms in our encounters with others. In the citadel of the interior life, the predominant fault is the weak spot undefended by the virtues. Here it reigns as an enemy within the gates: concealed, disguised, and potent. The devil knows this fault, this enemy, and knows precisely where he is located. He works with him to destroy the citadel. If we ourselves do not know him, then we cannot fight him. If we cannot fight him, we have no true interior life and will make but little progress in this world.

How then do we find him? First by prayer: "My God,

what makes me resist Thy Divine Grace? Give me the strength to submit to it. Free me from my bonds, however painful that may be." Second, we examine our soul with merciless realism: What is the subject of my ordinary preoccupations in the morning when I awake, and when I am alone? Where do my thoughts and desires spontaneously fly? What is the ordinary cause of my sadness and of my joy? What is the general motivation of my actions and my sins?



*The Gossips*, by Camille Claudel, 1897, marble-onyx, bronze, Paris; Right: *Confession*, by Giuseppe Maria Crespi

the nature of my temptations, the cause of my resistance to Grace? – particularly when it draws me away from my prayers or distracts me in them. Thirdly, what do other people criticise in me? my spiritual director, if I have one? my family, those I live with, those who know me the best? Fourthly, how has the Holy Spirit inspired me in moments of true fervour? What does He ask me to sacrifice for love of Him? If we adopt these measures with sincerity and constancy of spirit we will come face to face with this interior enemy which enslaves us. Our Lord says in St

John's Gospel (8.34): "Whosoever committed sin is the servant of sin."

St James and St John wished to call down fire from heaven on a city that refused to receive them. But the Lord rebuked these "Sons of Thunder" (*Boanerges*, as He called them), saying: "Ye know not of what spirit ye are. The Son of Man came not to destroy, but to save." (St Luke 9:55). But already at the Last Supper we see St John content only to rest his head on the Divine Heart of the Saviour, and at the end of his life he did little else, we are told, than to repeat constantly "My little children, love one another." He had lost nothing of his ardour or thirst for justice, but it had become spiritualised and elevated by an extraordinary gentleness.

### 3. How to Conquer the Predominant Fault

When, with the grace of God, we have discovered our predominant fault, we must make the firm resolve to overcome it. To do so, we need a true and stable fervour of the will, or a "promptness of the will in the service of God", which, according to St Thomas, is the essence of true devotion. Now there are three principal means to overcome the predominant fault and they are: 1) prayer; 2) examination of conscience; and 3) a sanction.

**1) Prayer:** Once God has answered my prayer to show me what the predominant fault is, I should be assiduous and fervent in beseeching His help to overcome it. If I am weak, I pray "O God my Strength! Give me strength!" If I am irascible: "O God my Patience! Give me patience! "If I am sensual; "My God and my all!" .....and so on. The saints have prayed in the following ways: St. Louis Bertrand: "Lord, here burn! here cut! here dry up all that hinders me from coming to Thee, that Thou mayest spare me in eternity." St Nicholas of Flue: "My Lord and my

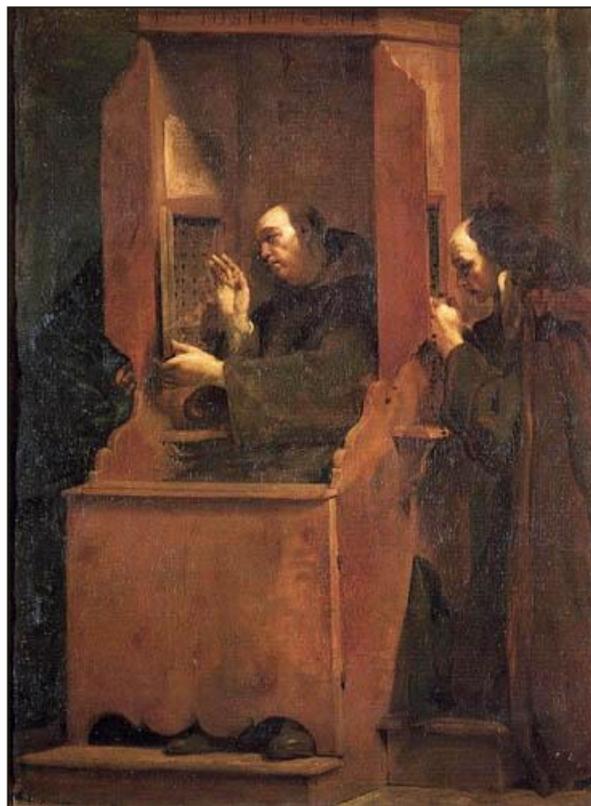
God! Take everything from me that hinders me from Thee! My Lord and my God! Give everything to me that will bring me to Thee! My Lord and my God! Take me from me and give me wholly to Thee."

**2) Examination of conscience:** It is very useful to make a particular examination of conscience in the field of my predominant fault every evening: not just a general examination which is useful for every-one as part of their night prayers: to appraise their spiritual life in general; but a concentrated look at that particular weakness which has been the cause of my undoing so many times in the past.

St Ignatius of Loyola considers it very appropriate for beginners to write down each week the number of times they have yielded to that predominant fault which seeks to reign in them like a tyrant. Fr Garrigou-Lagrange remarks: "It is easier to laugh at this matter fruitlessly, than to apply it fruitfully." If we keep track of the money we spend and receive, why should we not keep a track of what we lose and gain in the spiritual field, which are losses and gains for Eternity?

**3) The Sanction:** It is also very useful to impose a sanction or a penance on oneself each time we notice that we have fallen into this fault. The penance may take the form of a particular prayer, a moment of silence, or an exterior or interior mortification. This helps us to be more circumspect for the future, and makes reparation for the fault and satisfaction for the penalty owing to it. In this way many people have cured themselves, for example of blasphemy or of cursing, by obliging themselves to give alms each time they fall.

In the arduous combat against the predominant fault we must take courage. We may be tempted to pusillanimity, particularly by the devil: to think that



we will never be able to eradicate it, never be able to master ourselves. But we should not make peace with our faults, otherwise we will be abandoning the interior life altogether, and our one goal in this life which is perfection. God has commanded us to be perfect, so it must be possible, that is to say with His Grace. The Council of Trent declares with St Augustine: "God never commands the impossible, but, in giving us His precepts, He commands us to do what we can, and ask for the Grace to do what we cannot."

The other temptation to pusillanimity comes from comparing ourselves with the canonised saints. We resignedly think that this struggle against our defects is suitable only for them, so that they might reach the highest regions of spirituality and sanctity which are not for us, but reserved for them alone. And yet as we have said, did Our Lord not command us to be perfect: to love Him with all our hearts, soul, strength, and mind, and our neighbour as ourself? This, then, is the task of every-one, even if our love may never be as remarkable as that of the canonised saints with all the extraordinary talents and gifts that they received.

Before conquering the predominant fault, our virtues are more like good inclinations than true and solid virtues that have taken root in us. When, with God's help, we have overcome it, the virtues become firm and strong in the nourishing rays of Charity. Charity, the love of God and of souls, comes to reign in our souls through our predominant virtue. It transforms our temperament, making us more truly ourselves:

ourselves without our defects, ourselves in Charity, in God.

Peace will enter the soul, and the interior joy that it brings with it, because peace is the tranquillity of order which we have re-established in our souls by our mortification, that is, by our struggle against our own evil.

We become open to God like a flower opening to the sun: no longer referring all things to ourselves, as we did when the predominant fault reigned, but referring all things to Him: thinking always of Him, living always for Him, and leading back to Him all those with whom we come into contact. God has answered our prayer to take us

from ourselves and make us wholly His, whereby we have lost nothing except for our evil, and we have gained our true self, our true being in Him.

Thanks be to God! □



*The Ladder of Divine Ascent,*  
St Catherine Monastery, 12<sup>th</sup> century.

# Forthcoming Events

**Clergy Retreat 13-17 May 2019**, Starts 3pm – ends 2pm. Douai Abbey RG7 5TQ **£333/pers.**

In the peaceful setting of [Douai Abbey](#) in Berkshire. Theme: “**The Most Holy Eucharist, Heart of our priestly life.**”

**For:** any clergy, including deacons – plus seminarians and religious. We were 15 last year.

**Comfort:** single room, full board. Every room has ensuite bathroom and toilet (plus comfortable armchair & desk). Lift access. Excellent food! Nice grounds.

**Bookings:** Send your full contact details and any dietary requirement to 'Clergy Retreat 2019, St Mary's Priory, Smith Street, Warrington WA1 2NS, Cheshire, England'. Please include either the full payment (by cheque made payable to FSSP England) or via our PayPal account (via [fssp.co.uk/donate](http://fssp.co.uk/donate)); or include the non refundable £33.00 deposit. If paying by bank transfer, please mention 'Clergy Retreat' and use the following details:

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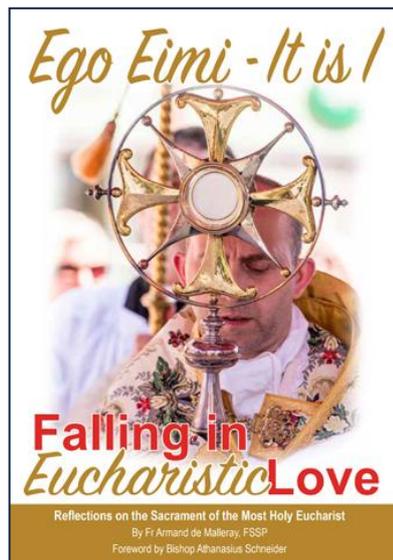
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**Schedule:** two 40-minute conferences a day. Holy Hour. Latin Compline. Optional Latin Vespers with the Benedictine monks. Private Mass in the missal of your choice. Table readings.

**Reference:** As in previous years, we are grateful for the advertising granted in their *Ad Clerum*'s by various dioceses such as Liverpool, Leeds, and Brentwood.

Fr de Malleray is the author of the following book on the Holy Eucharist: [www.lumenfidei.ie/product/ego-emi-it-is-i/](http://www.lumenfidei.ie/product/ego-emi-it-is-i/) (cf picture above).



**Pentecost Pilgrimage to Chartres, France: 7-11 June 2019.** Join our young adults, with Fr Patrick O'Donohue, FSSP. Book early for LMS sponsorship. Contact: [odonohue@fssp.org](mailto:odonohue@fssp.org) ; also visit [chartresuk.blogspot.com](http://chartresuk.blogspot.com).

**Day on the Holy Eucharist for Young Adults 18-35, Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2019** at St Mary Moorfields, London 4-5 Eldon St, London EC2M 7LS. Organised by [Juventutem London](#). Preacher: Fr de Malleray, FSSP

**Confirmations** on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2019 7pm, by His Grace Archbishop Malcolm McMahon, OP of Liverpool, at St Mary's Shrine in Warrington. Contact & Bookings: [padrek@libero.it](mailto:padrek@libero.it).

**Becoming Saints in an Anti-Christian World**  
Douai Abbey RG7 5TQ, Berks, **19-21 July 2019**  
Convivial Weekend for young adults 18-35 with doctrinal and spiritual talks, debates, Holy Mass, Confessions and Eucharistic Adoration. All meals provided, limited places available. Single room (ensuite): £150; Shared room (cottage): £110\*  
\*Student discount available. Led by Fr Armand de Malleray FSSP, with Fr Patrick O'Donohue, FSSP. Organised by [Juventutem London](#) & FSSP England. For more info or to reserve a place, please contact: [juventutemldn@gmail.com](mailto:juventutemldn@gmail.com) or +44 7768 060068

## All to the Peak District next August!

Our two summer camps will take place at Savio House, Ingersley Road, Bollington, Macclesfield SK10 5RW.

**St Peter's Summer Camp 2019 for Boys** (age 10-13 & 14-17) from 3pm, Monday 5 August 2019 to 3pm, Saturday 10 August 2019.

**St Petronilla's Summer Camp 2019 for Girls** (age 10-13 & 14-17) from 3pm, Monday 12 August 2019 to 3pm, Saturday 17 August 2019.

Ask Fr O'Donohue for a booking form for your child(ren): [odonohue@fssp.org](mailto:odonohue@fssp.org) –

St John Fisher House, 17, Eastern Avenue, Reading RG1 5RU – Tel: 0118 966 5284

Dedicated sponsors are needed to help cover the cost of running the camps this summer.

Cost: 1) Full estimated cost per child: **£210**

2) Subsidised rate per child: **£100** (let us know how much you can afford if below £100).

# Caravaggio's *Supper at Emmaus*

Caravaggio gave two renditions of the Supper at Emmaus: the [earlier](#) one (1601, below) is in England at the London National Gallery; the [later](#) one (1606, next page) is in Italy at the Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan. This commentary by Fr Armand de Malleray, FSSP is about the latter painting.

## Knowledge

“**T**hen the eyes of both of them were opened”, we read of Adam and Eve in the Book of Genesis after their original sin (Gn 3:7). Many centuries later, at the end of his Gospel, Saint Luke uses the same words to announce the Resurrection of Jesus Christ to another couple, the two pilgrims of Emmaus: “*Their eyes were opened*” (Lk 24:31). In each one of these episodes then, a spiritual disclosure brings to a couple a specific understanding. Adam and Eve “*realised that they were naked*”; while the Emmaus pilgrims “*recognised Him*”. Equally, on both occasions, an item of food causes this enlightenment: the stolen apple of the serpent; the blessed bread of the Saviour.

Having lost Eden where everything was bathed in the divine light of innocence, our first parents opened their eyes to the darkness of sin. Conversely, on the day of the Resurrection, by sunset, the pilgrims of Emmaus open wide their eyes to the dawn of salvation when the risen Christ, true Sun of Justice, is revealed to them. Then is the hour of grace recovered.

Let us examine this latter episode. In the Paschal radiance of the divine Spouse, humanity awakes from the long slumber in which the Prince of this world – Satan – was holding it captive. Caravaggio's painting displays this blessed instant as an irradiation.



His picture suggests a parallel between the two pilgrims of Emmaus and Adam and Eve. In a fascinating shortcut, discreet enough to avoid contrivance though, Caravaggio paints for us the history of humanity: from our original fall to our blessed restoration. Led by art, let us admire as in a mirror this painted reflection of our fallen ancestors in the persons of their offspring, along sinful millenaries until the day of our rising!

## Mirror

Thus, let us consider the first couple in our painting, standing at the top on the right. They are in all probability the innkeeper and his wife who, in the artist's imagination, have welcomed these three pilgrims for the night. In this humble married couple, following the parallel drawn in the Bible, a spiritual reading of the painting reveals to us Adam and Eve, our first parents, whose fault led us into the darkness of sin. Here they are then, these pitiful innkeepers of all humanity: whose pride one day imprisoned sons and daughters and all descendants in a sad dwelling called “Downfall”.

Consequently, it is their offspring, ourselves, which the couple of “pilgrims” sitting at the ends of the table represents, punctuating our journey towards death with a few licks of obscure dishes, in the growing shadow of dusk. Of only one of the pilgrims do we know the identity: a man named “Cleopas”; this is the bearded person sitting on the right. The other pilgrim is turning his back to us, as if he were unaware of our presence. It is strange: why has the artist deliberately hidden the face of this second guest, whose surprised expression would after all have enriched the scene with a beautiful piece of painting? All the more so since, five years earlier, in a version of the same scene kept in London, Caravaggio had not hidden the face of the second pilgrim. But also, in that former version, the innkeeper was present without his wife: it is only in our painting that she appears.

The landlady's face eclipses that of the pilgrim. If the second pilgrim's identity, masculine in this case, is



concealed here, would it not be in order to give it the same function of *alter ego* in relation to Cleopas as the hostess adopts in relation to the innkeeper, they who, as we have seen, represent Adam and Eve, the fallen couple?

The pilgrim pair, a couple saved by the Resurrection of Christ, reflects the previous couple as if through the mirror of Salvation. Adam lives anew in Cleopas, Eve in this anonymous guest, this vacant figure with which each observer, whether man, woman or child, can now identify, thus becoming an actor in the painting.

Actor, but of which part, do you say? That of partner in grace with every believing soul, united by intimate bonds through faith in Him Who has risen: “*and they recognised Him*” (Lk 24:31). Caravaggio offers us a striking confrontation between our first parents and

their descendants. Now that the Redemption once promised if fulfilled, the original couple sees its heirs delivered of their guilt.

On either side of the Risen Lord then, are two couples. Set back on the right, the couple of Adam and Eve stands, depicted as innkeepers. In the foreground, the pilgrims are seated: the first couple to witness the victory of the Messiah which had been announced to their sinful forefathers.

### **Innkeepers**

From its dark abode, this ancient couple now emerges. Their heads are leaning towards each other, symmetrical in relation to the column of darkness rising up from the head of Cleopas. But they are not looking

at each other: shame binds them together, rather than tender affection. They represent the two sides, masculine and feminine, of the one fallen humanity. Each like a reflection of the other, their faces exude the bitterness and tedium of having until this moment waited in limbo for this Salvation at which their offspring, sitting in front of them, suddenly marvel.

They are weary. The same wrinkles line their humourless, youthless foreheads. The same soiled caps conceal their dark hair. Their twin faces are three-quarters revealed, the left ear uncovered, the right cheek and forehead in profile emerging from a neckline of dull hemp under the beige sackcloth of the jacket or apron. Their look is emotionless or even defiant with regard to the sign performed beneath their eyes. They seem too deep in loneliness to show any interest. Their apathy is the final result of the sad seclusion from which the Resurrection comes to lift them.

In the dish that she is holding out, Eve is carrying, as though in acknowledgement, the rib from which she was formed. Adam's unbuttoned stomach echoes this Caravaggian pun, as if the stitches across his scarred abdomen had burst to remind us that out of her husband's side, Eve had once been fashioned (cf Gen 2:22). This couple thus shows the mark of its origin: they remember the happy days before their guilt, the time of their unblemished love for their Creator, the joy of their complete submission to the will of God – all ruined, through their own fault.

## Heirs

Their heirs on the other hand, these two pilgrims at table, form a wholly spiritual couple whose root is grace, not nature. In the newborn Church, the mystical union of the members is more profoundly fertile than mere conjugal complementarity. Men and women, rich and poor, Jews and Greek – all are bound together in the risen Christ, Who guarantees to these pilgrims a different progeny, freed from the constraints of the flesh, begotten as it is of apostolic zeal and brotherly love. They represent an embryo of the primitive



*“company of believers [...in which] there was one heart and soul” (Acts 4:32).*

We see them sitting, facing one another. Their hands mark out a perfect square on the two sides of the table. They are not looking at each other anymore than the landlord couple are. But unlike those shamefaced old people, they commune in the contemplation of the Unique Object – this God whom they believed to be dead! Their common clothing expresses their spiritual proximity: they are both bare-headed and are both wearing a tunic under a beige cloak draped over their left shoulder, falling diagonally across their chest.

## Hands

Finally, the different positions of their hands recall those of their first parents Adam and Eve, symbolised by the innkeeper (for Cleopas) and by the landlady (for the faceless pilgrim). Cleopas' hands reproduce the posture of his counterpart, the innkeeper: pointing downwards, clasping the table, like the landlord with his arms down and his hands holding his belt. By contrast, the landlady's hands (on which the dish is placed) are opened upwards like the wide-open hands of the stranger which seem to rise up above the table.

Significantly, Christ ensures the transition between the pilgrims' hands by the juxtaposition of His left hand, turned downwards and resting on the table like that of Cleopas (except that it is only bent, not clenched) – and of His right hand rising up above the table like the hand

of the faceless pilgrim, although the fingers are less open and not yet spread.

Thus, starting with the left hand of Cleopas, then passing via his right hand and then via the hands of Jesus and of the anonymous pilgrim, we move through a spiral taking us up in a circle from the table. Through His central position and the intermediate posture of His hands, neither clenched nor surprised, Christ revives for the pilgrims' couple the cohesion and dynamism which the innkeepers' couple had lost.

### Communion

Moreover, this spiral is balanced by three objects (edible) which occupy the centre of each pair of hands: the pitcher of wine for Cleopas (behind which we can see a half-filled glass), the broken loaf for Christ, and the full loaf for the anonymous pilgrim. The hands of Adam and Eve are positioned on the painting to frame the two elements of their shared origin according to the flesh, namely, Adam's unstitched abdomen and Eve's rib. Similarly, Cleopas and his fellow pilgrim present respectively the wine and the bread as the two originating species of their spiritual reunion.

These symbols express a reciprocity which establishes each of the couples in its relationship. Thus, Adam's unbuttoned 'wound' refers to Eve's origin, and Eve's rib evokes Adam's side. Similarly, the bread and the wine evoke each other – through the Eucharistic connotation of the blessing pronounced by Christ.

Let us remember the context in which these separate observations spontaneously occur: man, his fall, his redemption. The community of origin of the first human couple was marked in the flesh: the wound, the rib. God guaranteed it, He Who had created it. Thus, man having separated himself from God through sin, became at the same time divided: his spouse was no longer the flesh of his flesh, his other self, but rather the humiliating object of his concupiscence. What affliction, as expressed in the dejected faces of the innkeeper and his wife! Conversely, in returning to God through the merits of Christ, man comes back to himself. Other human beings

become his fellow-men again and his neighbours. Having at last left this distant country, the land of discord, they return to grace, their homeland.

### Ambassadors

From that moment, see the dynamic and joyful unity gathering the two pilgrims: their sad flight, their desertion from Jerusalem are forgotten – through the gift of Faith, Christ makes them members of the one Body onto which grace looks to graft all men. Here, the lost unity of the first couple is sumptuously restored; indeed it is augmented by the diversity of the people who will be gathered together within this mystical Body of Christ, which is the universal Church.

On the table-cloth, a discreet line of demarcation winds between faded and flowering lilies: like a symbol of another boundary now crossed, this Passover through which Adam and Eve, pallid skeletons of humanity until recently still fallen, are reborn for the glory of the Redemption of which our two pilgrims are the first couple to be informed.

Outside, a Light, through an invisible door open on the left of the painting, is calling them. Faith galvanises them: they get up in haste – no more will they sleep! Jesus leaves this gloomy lodging only in order to embrace them better in the witness they die to bear to Him on every road and before any tribunal: He is alive!

□



*This commentary was first published in 2001, originally in French, as part of the Caravaggio volume of the Art for Souls series of CD-Roms. The English translation is by Robert Johnston and the author.*

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(Picture: Last February, your 7 FSSP UK & Ireland priests visited the building we hope to buy soon, next to our church in Warrington.)

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